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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 003289

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SUBJECT: DFM KARASIN AND EUR DAS BRYZA DISCUSS GEORGIA AND  
NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a November 1 meeting, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin and EUR DAS and U.S. Minsk Group Co-Chair Matt Bryza discussed Georgia, with Karasin striking a more constructive tone but insisting that access for international monitors to Abkhazia and South Ossetia had to be negotiated directly with the separatists. Both sides agreed there were prospects for progress going into the November 2 Nagorno-Karabakh summit talks, but that the sides had to remain focused on the Basic Principles proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs. Karasin noted both sides were trying to shape the Basic Principles to their advantage, and urged Bryza and the other Co-Chairs to allow the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents to talk through their differences on the key principles before proposing any new solutions. On Georgia, Karasin was non-committal in response to Bryza's requests that Russia agree not to restrict the participation of members of the Georgian delegation to Geneva, agree to allow international monitors into Akhalkalaki, extend the security zone patrolled by the EU Monitoring Mission into South Ossetia, and allow humanitarian aid into Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia proper. Karasin noted Russian concerns about the possibility of Georgian aggression in the security zones, the prospect of new armed conflict, and the need for substantive discussions on security in Geneva. Karasin reiterated Russia's version of the Georgian "aggression" on August 7, suggesting Georgia had duped the U.S. He called the idea of redrawing the Soviet-era borders of South Ossetia "dangerous," since it could "create problems in other regions." End Summary.

¶2. (C) On the eve of the November 2 meetings between President Medvedev and the Azeri and Armenian Presidents at the Maiendorf Castle near Moscow, U.S. Minsk Group co-Chair Matt Bryza, Conflicts Advisor Michael Carpenter, and Ambassador Beyrle met with Deputy Foreign Minister (DFM) Grigoriy Karasin to discuss the prospects for settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as well as the situation in Georgia.

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Nagorno-Karabakh  
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¶3. (C) In view of the presidential meetings between Medvedev, Azerbaijani president Aliyev, and Armenian president Sargsian, scheduled for the next day, DAS Bryza warned that the Minsk Group was "drifting" and needed to propose a solution on the Lachin corridor, in order to keep the sides from walking away from the table and proposing new formulations outside the framework of the Basic Principles, which had already been largely agreed. Bryza noted that Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov was seeking to amend the understanding that had been reached on the Basic Principles to push for Armenia to first remove its troops, after which Azerbaijan and Turkey would open their borders, and only then would negotiations take place on NK's future

status. Bryza warned that would not produce a balanced agreement, as agreed previously, and told Karasin that a package agreement with step-by-step implementation was the only option both sides could support. Bryza welcomed the fact that President Aliyev was now refraining from talking of using force to resolve the conflict.

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Georgia  
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Geneva Process  
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14. (C) On Georgia, Karasin outlined three concerns. The first was the lack of agreement with the EU on the modalities of the security zones around South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The second concern was the need to move forward, in spite of the different positions on the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, on issues of mutual concern between the U.S. and Russia. Karasin warned that renewed fighting could break out if the breakaway regions remained isolated. Georgia might "cunningly" try to repeat its August 8 "aggression." Bryza pushed back and told Karasin that the negotiations on Georgia would continue for a long time, and that Russia's compliance with the August 12 cease-fire would remain in the spotlight even as the U.S. and Russia discussed other issues of mutual concern.

15. (C) Karasin's third concern was that the parties to the conflict needed to discuss security issues in Geneva without boycotting sessions. Karasin reiterated Russia's condition

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that South Ossetian and Abkhaz representatives must participate in talks about security issues in Geneva. He lamented that the separatists walked out of the talks on October 15 over procedural issues, such as different colored badges. Karasin also warned that continued "provocations" such as the inclusion of people like Alan Parastayev -- a South Ossetian who was serving a term for an attempt on the life of the republic's "president" Kokoity, but escaped from the Tskhinvali jail August 8 and now was a Saakashvili supporter -- or Dmitriy Sanakoyev, the head of the Tbilisi-backed Provisional Administration in South Ossetia, or Malkhaz Akishbaya, head of the pro-Georgian government-in-exile for Abkhazia, could cause the talks to "freeze up" once again. Karasin welcomed EU Special Representative for the Crisis in Georgia Pierre Morel's plans to travel to Sukhumi and Tskhinvali with Finnish OSCE Special Envoy Heikki Talvitie and UN Special Representative for Georgia Johan Verbeke, but worried that Georgia would not accept anything that might be agreed during the trip.

16. (C) Bryza promised to discourage the Georgians from including persons like Parastayev in the delegation, but warned that Georgia would not sit across from South Ossetian and Abkhaz Delegations as an equal. He predicted, however, that Georgia's position would evolve over several iterations of meetings. Bryza reported Morel's plans to start the November 18 Geneva meetings where the October 15 conference had left off -- with working group meetings, this time using only the Russian and English languages. Karasin warned that the South Ossetian and Abkhaz sides would feel "cheated" if the November 18 conference were to start without their participation in a plenary session. In response to the Ambassador's question about reports that Russia wished to see the Geneva process conclude in December, Karasin said the talks should be short and productive, without elaborating further.

Russian stonewalling  
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17. (C) Karasin skirted Bryza's requests for Russia not to veto the composition of the Georgian delegation to Geneva,

allow OSCE monitors into South Ossetia, allow for an OSCE Office in Akhagori, extend the security zone patrolled by the EU Monitoring Mission into South Ossetia, and allow humanitarian aid into Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia proper. He only said Russia held no sway over South Ossetia regarding OSCE monitors, allowed Russia might create transparent areas to observe in the separatist regions if the current security zone in Georgia proper proved peaceful, and advised to talk to authorities in Vladikavkaz regarding humanitarian access. Karasin repeated Russia's usual concerns about the monitors' presence: South Ossetia mistrusted the monitors because they had not warned Tskhinvali about the impending Georgian aggression; it was unclear who should provide for the monitors' security; the observer missions had to be renamed to lose any reference to Georgia, and maintain regional headquarters, not just in Tbilisi.

#### August conflict

18. (C) Karasin reiterated Russia's version of the August 7 events, saying A/S Fried had told him August 7 that the U.S. had "turned off the oxygen" on Saakashvili, but that he had attacked anyway. Bryza recounted his own version of the events on August 7, in which Georgian FM Eka Tkeshelashvili called saying Georgia had initiated a unilateral cease-fire, but later called again to say that South Ossetians continued shelling Georgian villages north of Tskhinvali while Russian troops were going through the Roki tunnel, forcing the GOG to defend its citizens. Karasin said that Russian special envoy Yuriy Popov called at 8 pm to report that Georgian troops and special forces were moving on Tskhinvali, whereupon Karasin called Fried. According to Karasin, Russian troops only entered the Roki tunnel "at dawn on the 8th." Karasin claimed the GOR and its military at all levels never planned to take Tbilisi, even when they were 40 minutes from the capital. Karasin claimed he had been ridiculed by the Duma as a "softie" for not pushing recognition of the regions sooner, which could have "avoided the war."

"Saakashvili got the green light from Washington"

19. (C) Bryza rejected Karasin's conclusion that Georgia had manipulated the U.S. and found willing ears in Washington for its plans of aggression. Bryza noted that the latest rumor -- that a VPOTUS aide had allegedly given Georgia the green

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light for armed action -- was ridiculous, as it insinuated Saakashvili listened to an advisor to the VP over the message of President Bush to avoid being provoked into a war. Bryza advocated greater transparency on the ground, noting both sides' accusations that the other side was instigating new violence, Georgian sensitivities over the Russian presence in Akhagori, and the need for Georgian troops at the four bases near Akhagori to conduct regular movements without causing an alarm to go off in Moscow.

"Redrawing borders is dangerous"

110. (C) Karasin disagreed with Bryza's depiction of the situation in Akhagori, saying it had been part of South Ossetia since 1922, hence the borders could not be redrawn, as "that would be dangerous and create problems in other regions."

111. (C) In response to Bryza's question, Karasin discouraged Bryza from visiting Sukhumi or Tskhinvali, saying officials there were overwhelmed by humanitarian aid visits now. The U.S. role was to convince Georgia that military revenge would be disastrous for Georgia. Karasin said that the Russian ambassador would arrive before the end of the year and serve as Russia's coordinator for bilateral relations, while the

GOR was considering stationing liaison officers to maintain contact with the EU observers in the border areas.

¶12. (U) DAS Bryza cleared this cable.

BEYRLE